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ABSTRACT

This document describes the Experiential Leadership Development (ExLD) Program, a program designed to emphasize leadership and interpersonal skill development for undergraduate students. The program offers a comprehensive program of leadership and interpersonal skill development through academic coursework, leadership seminars, and practical application (interning, mentoring, organizational involvement). The background and rationale for the program are given and the goal of the program is stated to be the enhancement of interpersonal skill growth that will build confidence for leadership action. The three components of the ExLD Program are described: (1) academic coursework identified as having leadership and interpersonal skill building potential; (2) free leadership seminars offered on campus and involving presenters from the university community as well as government, business, and industry; and (3) practical application. A discussion of faculty, business/industry, and student reactions to the program concludes the document. (NB)

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Academic Enhancement Through Planned Leadership Growth and Development

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, post-secondary education has been synonymous with academics to the point that graduates of institutions of post-secondary education lack time to comprehensively plan participation in individual growth, development and learning activities outside the classroom in addition to major organizations.

The Experiential Leadership Development (ExLD) Program offers a comprehensive program of leadership and interpersonal skill development through academic coursework, leadership seminars and practical application (interning, mentoring, shadowing, career exploration, volunteerism and significant organizational involvement). The goal of the program is to enhance interpersonal skill growth, therefore, building confidence for leadership action.

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I. **Background and Rationale for Experiential Leadership Development (ExLD) Program.** Quality education needs to be redefined to include greater personal and intellectual competence, a higher level of tolerance for ethnic and cultural differences, increased leadership capabilities, and a greater appreciation for the home and community (Feldman and Newcomb, 1969; Chickering, 1974; Astin, 1977; Bowen, 1977; Stodt and Klepper, 1987).

II. **Program Components.** The Experiential Leadership Development (ExLD) Program emphasizes leadership and interpersonal skill development for undergraduate students. Students begin with a personal assessment of their leadership and interpersonal skills. The assessment allows them to identify those areas of less strength and to develop their ExLD plan to enhance them.

The ExLD program has three component areas: academic coursework identified by as having leadership and interpersonal skill building potential; free leadership seminars are offered on campus and involve presenters from the University community as well as government, business and industry; and practical application.

Practical application allows the student to explore leadership and interpersonal skill use in several settings. Students are encouraged to include interning in their ExLD growth

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plan. If they do secure an internship, preparation and follow-up of the experience are provided by staff.

Students shadow a leader as they conduct the affairs of their position. An inventory is provided the student which the student completes with the leader, a follower and the student's personal observations. The staff assist the student in determining the experience's implications in the development of their leadership style.

Mentoring is encouraged with a leader in faculty, government, business and industry and/or through participation in the Odyssey. Odyssey, a journey with a leader, pairs upperclass students with freshman students.

Career exploration involves investigation of the student's chosen career. Career Planning and Placement, the Internship Office, as well as a number of other services at the University partner to offer a structured review of requirements and opportunities in the career area, projected growth of the career area, location of the current available positions, and positioning for entry into the career area.

Students are required to perform at least 20 hours of volunteerism throughout their undergraduate career. Students are encouraged to discuss their volunteer experiences with fellow ExLD members.

Signficant organizational involvement benefits both the student and the organization. Long term it is expected that a strengthening of organizations on campus will occur due to the

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growth and development of ExLD students and their impact on others.

Throughout this entire process advisors are kept abreast of their advisees involvement in the ExLD Program. Validated experiences and involvement are pulled together to produce a narrative ExLD transcript.

III. **Faculty Reaction.** Initial funding was provided through a board is comprised of fifteen faculty members representing the various departments within the college. The members took ownership in the program and have been instrumental in promoting the program.

ExLD does not replace the advisor role but rather works in harmony with the advisor, keeping the advisor informed of the student's leadership and interpersonal involvement and development and providing them copies of all correspondence.

IV. **Business/Industry Reaction**. Business and industry involvement has provided a pivotal role in the leadership seminars. Recruiters have been extremely supportive of the narrative ExLD transcript seeing it as closing a gap in the interviewing/hiring process.

V. **Student Reactions.** ExLD's greatest strength lies in the ability of staff to connect students with opportunities that exist on campus in a timely fashion.

Students evaluate each component of the program. Students are utilized to introduce presenters at ExLD leadership seminars; conduct ice breakers, chair group volunteer activities; assist in

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Promotion of the Exld program; and serve on the Exld Steering Committee.

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